

4639
FREE THOUGHTS

U P O N

The DOCTRINES of ELECTION,

F A L L of M A N,

A N D

RESTORATION by *CHRIST*.

[Price Six-pence.]

FREE THOUGHTS

U P O N

The Doctrines of Election,

MAN,



T A

Restoration by CHRIST.

[Price Six-pence.]

FREE THOUGHTS
UPON
The DOCTRINES of ELECTION,
FALL of MAN,
AND
RESTORATION by CHRIST.
IN WHICH
The principal OBJECTIONS are answer'd against
CHRIST the Propitiation for SIN.

By WILLIAM CUDWORTH.



L O N D O N:

Printed by J. HART, and Sold by M. COOPER, in *Pater-
Noster-Row*, and at the Pamphlet-Shops in *London* and
Westminster. 1747.

FREE THOUGHTS

UPON

The Doctrines of ELECTION,

FAITH, OF MAN,

RESTORATION BY CHRIST

The principles of the Christian religion
as they stand in the world today



BY WILLIAM GUNWORTHY

LONDON:

Printed by J. H. & Co. and Sold by M. Cooper, 1, Pall Mall, London, and at the Principal Booksellers in the Kingdom.



FREE THOUGHTS
UPON
The DOCTRINES of ELECTION,
FALL of MAN,
AND
RESTORATION by CHRIST.



HAVING observ'd much contention of late, in the points of *election*, the *fall of man*, and *restoration by Christ*, between the *Calvinists*, on one hand, and those call'd *Arians*, &c. on the other; and conceiving that in some respects there is *truth* on both sides, I take the liberty of presenting to the *publick*, some FREE THOUGHTS upon the subjects; humbly presuming they will be acceptable to *those*, who are not byass'd by any *particular party*. I hope, therefore, such as are of

this mind, will give me a candid hearing, excuse my weakness in any thing offer'd, and where they see me evidently wrong, in a friendly manner set me to rights. I assure them I should take it quite kind, and should be very glad to see the *truth* set in a clearer light, tho' thereby I am demonstrated in any thing to be mistaken. Thus having made my *apology*, without taking up more of your time, I shall address myself to the *subject*.

God no doubt brings all things to pass, according to his *purpose*, according to the counsel of his own *will*; by which *purpose* or *will*, we are not to understand something that is caus'd, but a will eternal, uncaus'd, and immutable..

NEITHER are we to understand a *mere will*, destitute of, or unaccompanied with *wisdom*, because that is only an abstracted idea of will, form'd in our own minds, and not such a will as has any real existence in God; but as his will is eternal, without cause, so also it is accompanied with eternal uncreated wisdom and goodness. As far as this eternal wisdom and goodness is discover'd to us by the revelation he has made of himself in his *word* and *works*, so far it belongs to us to be acquainted with it, that we may render to him *due praise*; as far as any thing is ascribed to him evidently repugnant to wisdom and goodness, so far we may confidently assert his proceedings not understood, and misrepresented. But as far both in creation, providence, and government of the world, as his proceedings are mysterious and hidden, it becomes us to be silent as ~~to his~~ fault, but to submit implicitly to his proceedings, and still maintain and vindicate his character as *wise*, *holy*, *just*, and *good*, it being unreasonable for us, (who are unable to comprehend either what God is,
or

or how it becomes him to act agreeable to his own *perfections*, and agreeable to the relation he stands in to us, as creator, lord, and governor of the whole) to bring his actions to the bar of our judgment, because, unless we knew all things as he does, we are incapable of being judges.

WHEN we read, therefore, in the scriptures, of God's *elect*, his having chosen some in *Christ Jesus* to salvation before the world was, &c. and of others, who were of old ordain'd to condemnation, we have no *just foundation* to understand the determination of a *mere will*, without *wisdom* and *goodness*, which represents something very *unworthy* of God, and evidently repugnant to him, but rather from the perfections of his nature, we have reason to conceive by *elect* and *reprobate*, such persons, who (setting aside all consideration of *foreknowledge* or *decree*) would, according to the most holy, just, wise, and gracious proceedings of God, be made partakers of those *different states*; for as his goodness and wisdom are as *eternal* as his purpose and decree, and all things which have been, are now, or shall be, were ever present before him, or in his mind; so there has been nothing determin'd from eternity, but would become the perfections of God to determine now, could we suppose it undetermin'd. We should not, therefore, charge any thing upon God's *purpose* and *counsel*, which we would not charge upon his *present proceedings*; and as I mention'd before, where we understand them, it becomes us to *praise* and *vindicate* him, and where we do not, it becomes us to be *silent* and implicitly: to believe he will do nothing *unworthy* of himself; tho' he must be supposed to act according to reasons as much above our comprehension, as his wisdom is beyond ours.

THE right understanding of the doctrine of *election* and *reprobation*, is pretty much dependent on the doctrine of *man's liberty*, and in that respect it is allow'd by the *Westminster* divines in their *confession*, That, " God is not the author of sin, that
 " violence is not offer'd to the will of the creatures,
 " and that the liberty and contingency of second
 " causes is not hereby taken away, but rather
 " established."

IT is allow'd by Mr. *Gill*, * that " Man is a free
 " agent, and has a natural liberty of the will, and
 " that whatever concern the decree of God has in
 " the sins of men, it does not necessitate or force
 " them to do them, it does not at all infringe the
 " freedom of their will, or destroy their free
 " agency."†

FURTHER, says he, in another place, " God
 " foreknew that *Adam* would fall, as *Christ* did that
 " *Judas* would betray him, for he told him of it
 " before-hand, and yet God was no more the au-
 " thor of the sin and fall of *Adam*, than *Christ* was
 " of his betraying by *Judas*, nor did either *Adam*,
 " or *Judas*, feel any force or constraint from this
 " fore-knowledge, obliging them to sin, nor do
 " they ever complain of it, or impute their sin and
 " fall

* Answer to the *Birmingham* dialogue writer, p. 30.

† Mr. *Gill* indeed makes a distinction in other places between a natural, and moral or spiritual *liberty* of will, but to this I would observe, that if a man is really endow'd with *liberty of will*, or is his own *chooser*, the different objects propos'd to him, do not at all alter or destroy this *liberty*, but he enjoys it as much in *moral* or *spiritual* things, when propos'd and made known to him, as in any thing else. There is no reason therefore to suppose, that God in the faith, conversion, and salvation of his people, does destroy, prevent, or work without, but rather makes use of that *liberty* he has already given them.

“ fall unto it. Prescience thus stated, introduces
 “ no fatal necessity ; it is indeed attended with a
 “ necessity of infallibility, respecting the event,
 “ but not with a co-active necessity upon the wills
 “ of men, which are hereby left entirely free, and so
 “ they find themselves in the commission of every ac-
 “ tion, neither the decree of God, nor his fore-know-
 “ ledge, necessitate men, oblige, or compel them
 “ to do the things decreed and foreknown.” ||

AND indeed was not this allow'd, was not man his *own determiner*, was he not at liberty to *chuse* or *refuse*, notwithstanding the strongest motives or arguments from within or without, was he necessarily influenced to his choice by any imperceptible byas, or internal necessity, he could not be reckon'd blameworthy, because he is not left to his choice, or rather has no choice of his own, more than any *passive instrument* which is made use of either to do good or evil.

BUT as the most sober and judicious assertors of the doctrine of *election* and *reprobation* have allow'd men this *liberty*, I shall say no more of it, but consider what remains in this *view*.

IT is most true, that God's counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, and agreeable hereunto, God has immutably will'd and ordain'd the *natural freedom* of man, as he has his *being* ; and therefore the fulfilment of God's revealed will, how man being thus constituted, should *use* that freedom to his own happiness, the good of others, and God's glory, is a thing in the very nature of it necessarily left to be executed by man ; and as man is immu-

|| Cause of God and truth, vol. III. p. 252, 253.

B

tably

tably ordain'd a *free being*, he is as such immutably capable of resisting the will of God in this respect; and herein consists the possibility and nature of sin.

BUT it is not to be supposed, therefore, that any determination of his creatures, shall be able in any period of time to alter his mind, or make him change his purpose, and take a new course; for each distinct moment of time, and each circumstance in every moment, has not only been beheld of God in his eternal wisdom and infinite knowledge, but also hath its *distinct* reference to God's eternal will and decree, and no doubt he has eternally and unchangeably will'd what is best and fittest in every moment of time; and according to this, as he purpos'd to endow man with the liberty above-mention'd, he has also purpos'd to govern his creature man, and over-rule those evils which he perceiv'd would arise from the *wrong use* of their liberty, in such a manner as should appear to be best upon the whole, most for the good of the creature, and for his own glory.

AND in this view of things, it may be allow'd, that God hath fore-ordained whatsoever shall come to pass, because he hath chosen that *plan*, in which he foresaw those evils would arise, and hath determin'd his own conduct thereupon, in restraining, over-ruling, rewarding, and punishing, in the most wise, and suitable manner, without infringing or offering violence to the liberty or will of the creatures, or taking away the liberty and contingency of second causes, or determining any one to damnation, but in view of their absolutely free, and voluntarily *rejection* of him, and *rebellion* against him; or dealing in any case otherwise than one who is no respecter of persons. So that the will of the creature, doth in no wise alter his purpose or council, because
his

his purpose and council is order'd in view of the creatures exercising the liberty he has given them, and notwithstanding their *use* or *abuse* of it, his purpose stands, and he doth all his pleasure, and remains in one mind, and none can turn him.

Thus, tho' he would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, yet as he saw it not fit to save them but as consistent with all his perfections, and also with the use of that liberty he has given them, he has declared, that he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.

I would farther remark, that as this liberty of man is the *gift* of God, according to the good pleasure of his will; and as the right use of this liberty is made but instrumental to bring about his purpose and grace in the most suitable manner, there is no more merit or ground of boasting in man, in his being saved according to it, than if he was a most necessary agent; tho' at the same time the abuse of it in vicious and wrong choice, is justly condemnable; and the necessity of our being our own determiners, in this case appears plainly, if we consider, that if that wherein our salvation consists, was not a matter of choice, it could not be salvation to us, and there is no such thing as being saved against our will.

BUT here some may object, that the scripture saith, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy, and that he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardneth.

To which I answer, those scriptures are not given to teach us, that man is made use of in a

way contrary to his nature, like a mere machine, or that God's will and pleasure is destitute of wisdom, goodness, justice, &c. but they convey to us, that the favour and mercy of God, shewn to the sons of men, is from *sovereign goodness*, and is absolutely undeserv'd, and belongs neither to him that *willeth*, nor him that *runneth*, and that the executing judgments, and the disposal of every event, is to be left to his sovereign will and wisdom, to order all things for the *greatest good*, as he sees fit, without our replying against him, or asking wherefore he has done so. For he is such a *potter*, as knows how to make a right use of the power he has over his clay, as knows the reasons why he makes one vessel to *honour*, and another to *dishonour*, and for us short-sighted creatures to ascribe it either to *merit* in us, or *mere will* in him, because in many instances we cannot discover the reasons of his proceedings, is a very groundless supposition.

It may perhaps be thought by some to be the same thing, if God has created beings that he foreknew *would* be damn'd, as tho' he created them on *purpose* to be damn'd. I would therefore endeavour to remove this difficulty, by observing, that he knew it by a fore-knowledge of all things in their future existence, according to such a certainty of the event, as would be the same, tho' there was no such knowledge, whereby he knew his own wise and fit proceedings, in creating and governing them, as unalterably certain as every other event; therefore this kind of fore-knowledge can't be suppos'd to influence him to hinder or alter his own wise and fit proceedings, or the event that would come to pass. For to say God foreknew the things that would certainly be, and at the same time might hinder them from being, is a direct contradiction; and to say God foreknew

foreknew only as a necessary consequence of his disposal of things, by a fore-knowledge of causes, producing their necessary effects, as a man that has laid a *mine*, knows when and how it will blow up, would be to make man a necessary agent, and God the author of sin ; or more properly to make it no sin at all. But the truth is, God foreknew these things, not as what must be by necessary cause, but as what would be upon the best disposal of things that could be.

HENCE it appears, that as we may conceive of a certainty of the event, independent of any decree, the certainty of the event implies no such thing, and as there is no occasion to make the sins of men otherwise dependent on the decree of God, than by such a certainty of the event, as God foreknew would be in that plan of creation and government, which he wise and graciously chose ; so also his executing just judgments as the wages of sin, and rewarding according to their deeds, all those who have not fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them, is no otherwise to be ascribed to the decree of God, than as in foresight of those offences, which bring those just judgments upon them ; and the consideration that he over-rules the just judgments he executes, and the rebellion and opposition of such impenitent ones, for the good of others, and his own glory, may solve the cases of *Pharaoh*, and others we find in scripture, without having recourse to a *fatal necessity* of all actions, or understanding them in such a manner, as makes God in any case the *author of sin*.

As to the doctrine of the *fall*, and *original sin*, it must be confess'd, that to treat of it in such a manner as represents God designing evil against our
first

first parents, or any of his posterity, is to misrepresent him; but as I conceive it cannot be proved by the scripture account we have of it, that he was in any case the *author* of the sin and fall, or that his acting thereupon, has not been in greatest compassion, wisdom, and goodness, consistent also with the strictest justice, it is to be vindicated as a doctrine of truth, reveal'd in his word.

WHERE we plainly see, that any description of God's proceedings, is absolutely inconsistent with wisdom and justice, &c. we may justly reject it as misrepresentations of things, because it represents God as acting *unworthy* of himself, and the scriptures themselves must be always understood in a sense consistent with these perfections, because we cannot have greater assurance of any thing than that God is wise, holy, just, and good, neither can we depend upon his word, unless we thus honourably conceive of him.

BUT then it must be also remember'd, that when we are not able to demonstrate any description of God's proceedings to be absolutely inconsistent with the divine perfections, we are incapable of denying any description thereof laid down to us, because that method of acting, which appears probably the most wise and fit to our finite comprehensions, may appear to infinite wisdom most absurd and inconvenient; since the case stands thus, it is most reasonable for us to submit to that description of things we have in his word.

IT must, I think, be allow'd, that a creature cannot possibly be endued with such perfections, as to render them independant and self-sufficient, tho' they may be said to be **VERY GOOD**, when they answer the
the

the design for which they were created; and creatures of such limited perfections, endued with *liberty of choice*, are capable of sinning, (tho' not under a necessity of it) because capable of chusing contrary to the will of their creator, and breaking his commands.

It must also I conceive be allow'd, that the wise and good creator, and disposer of all things, has a sovereign right, without our calling his wisdom to our bar, to dispose to every rank of beings their due proportion of perfection, for the state wherein he has design'd them, and none have reason to complain, unless they are (without their own default) in a worse estate than not being at all; and tho' upon the fall, God has seen fit to bring *Adam's* posterity into the same fallen state and condition with their first parents, yet if (all things consider'd) they are not thereby become worse than not to be at all, there is no just ground of complaint from their being so dispos'd of.

ADAM seems according to the scripture account, to have been a creature adapted to the immediate care and direction of his maker, (tho' endued with those perfections and excellencies, which render'd him fit to be the lord and governor over this lower part of the creation) and while he kept innocent, and could be satisfy'd with thus being under God's immediate care and direction, he was immortal, having access to the *tree of life*, that would preserve him so, and was fully supply'd from all inconveniency and want, that he knew not so much that he was naked, not being sensible of shame or cold, much less did he find his weakness in any respect.

IF it be ask'd, whether it was a blessing to be ignorant of his own weakness ; I answer, yes ; while he was under such immediate supply, care, and protection of God, it would only be a useless piece of knowledge to him, and have a tendency to make him be sinfully careful of himself, and leave his dependance on his maker ; for, is it not a blessing to a child (whose deficiency is supply'd by the care of the parent) that it is not sensible of its weakness ; how unhappy would it be if it were not so !

THIS I apprehend was one reason why he was forbid to eat of the tree of knowledge of *good* and *evil*, because such knowledge, as he would obtain by eating of that tree, would be not only useless, but exceeding hurtful, filling him with that selfish carefulness, as would incline him to leave his dependance upon God, and be productive of all those evils which have come to pass, and whereby he became a vessel marred from his proper use in the hands of his maker.

THIS also was a sufficient reason for annexing the penalty of death to the eating of that tree, not only to deter him by the threatening from a thing so entirely unprofitable and hurtful to him, but also in case he fell from his innocence, to prevent his living for ever, which would only be a weapon in his hands to make him the greater enemy, and further from a reconciliation with God.

UPON the *fall*, man becomes again, as it were, the subject of divine consideration and wisdom ; and the proper disposal of *Adam's* posterity, and all this lower part of the creation, upon this event, is a matter that we are no more capable to judge of than the creation and disposal of things at first, who
hath

hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? who but himself can tell what is the fittest method to promote the *greatest good* on this occasion? we ought therefore not to persist in the sin of our first parent, and lean to our own understanding, but acquiesce in that disposal of things thereupon, which the word of God declares to us, and our own experience confirms.

As the evil effects which eating the *forbidden fruit* brought immediately upon our first parent, sufficiently vindicates God in his forbidding it in such a manner as he did, and shews his design therein to be tender and kind; so if these evil effects would also become hereditary to his posterity, it is a very sufficient reason for bringing all his posterity into the same condition with himself, and more especially as his judgments in this case are *medicinal*, and in view of a *restoration*.

HENCE we see it was *Adam*, not God, that brought this evil upon himself, and in consequence upon his posterity, for as his children would be all now like him, every one turning to their own way, and all taking care for themselves, it was needful to cut him and them off from all those advantages in that first estate man was placed in, that prove a hurt to their restoration.

BESIDES, if it was needful to guard the tree of life with a *threatning* and *curse*, if that threatning and curse be according to *truth*, and if God's mercy and compassion appear in this case; it must not be expected to be by falsifying his word in not executing sentence, but by providing a way of escape in the *seed of the woman*, who should bruise the serpent's head.

THIS brings me in the next place to consider the
C remedy,

remedy that God has in his great mercy and love provided for our *salvation* and *recovery*; and that, according to the *scripture account*, is, that the Lord laid our help upon one that is mighty, *Psal. xviii. 19.* who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, *1 Pet. ii. 24.* who was deliver'd for our offences, to finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness, *Dan. ix. 24.* and was rais'd again for our justification, *Rom. iv. 25.* having been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, *2 Cor. v. 21.* that as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one should many be made righteous, *Rom. v. 19.* that this wonderful person is no less than God manifest in flesh, *1 Tim. iii. 16.* to take away our sins, *1 John iii. 5.* who comes into the world as a child born unto us, and as a son given unto us, notwithstanding he is at the same time the mighty God, the everlasting father, *Is. ix. 6.* And herein God declares his righteousness in remission of sin, by setting forth *Jesus* as a propitiation thro' faith in his blood, and appears just, and at the same time the justifier of him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, *Rom. iii. 25, 26. iv. 6.* herein also the love and mercy of God appears, in that God spared not his own son, but freely deliver'd him up for us all, *Rom. viii.* as the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, *John i. 29.* in that he so loved the world of ungodly sinners, his enemies, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him (or trusteth on his righteousness, as perform'd for, and given to them) should not perish, but have everlasting life, *John iii. 16.*

As this doctrine of *salvation by Christ alone*, as the *propitiation for sin*, is thus plainly held forth in *scripture*,

ture, I need not say any more concerning it, but shall only consider some principal and common *objections* that are form'd against it.

It is objected, that nothing in the very terms can be a duty, which is an impossibility; by the assistance of divine grace, we may perform every precept of the law, every duty acceptable to God, and therefore there seems no need of such a strict obedience to the law, but he that directs his behaviour according to the *best* of his intellectual and moral powers, will attain everlasting life.

Ans. THE impossibility of obtaining life, or being justified by the law, does not lie in this, that it requires what is unreasonable, or out of the reach of human agency, assisted by divine grace, but in our being drawn away by our own lust, and not continuing in those things, which consider'd one by one, are most fit to be requir'd of us; this we find most surely true, that those very things we keep this hour, we break in the next; in this case, tho' we may suppose the goodness of God will consider us, yet as one command of the law is not more out of our power, assisted by divine grace, or less reasonable to be required than another, the matter cannot be remedy'd by any allowance or abatement, unless the whole law is abated, which would be acting unreasonably, and giving license to sin, and therefore is absolutely unbecoming the *divine being*; and I am persuaded, no man is able to lay down a more proper remedy in this case, than as the scriptures hath set forth, *i. e.* to provide a *propitiation*, and shew mercy consistent with the strictest justice, and vindication of the honour of the law. This argument then, that nothing can be expected from intelligent beings, but what is pro-

portion'd to their several powers, will not here take place, because the deficiency of man, whereby he stands in need of a propitiation, may be sufficiently pleaded from his transgressing, and not continuing in those things which are within his power.

ANOTHER objection against this doctrine, is, that it is *needless*, for that God has a sovereign right to forgive sin, or to mitigate or abate the punishment, upon the sinners repentance and amendment, because he is the creator, governor, and possessor of all things.

Ans. THE sovereignty of God, considered without his justice, wisdom, and goodness, ought never to be assign'd as the rule or reason of his acting, because he never doth act so; and if it is right to conceive of God's sovereignty in such a manner as to make way for the wisdom and goodness of God in the point of *election* and *reprobation*, it is as right to conceive of God's sovereignty, so as to make way for justice in the point of *man's salvation by Christ*.

AGAIN it is objected, that to represent God as denying mercy to repentance and amendment, is to represent him as *strict* and *unrelenting*.

Ans. THIS objection would have some force with it, if, as some have represented, it was one God that was angry, and another that made satisfaction, but as the scripture testifies it is the same God against whom the offence is committed, that was in Christ *reconciling* the world unto himself, finding out a way whereby he might be just as well as merciful, in not imputing our trespasses; this is not to represent God as strict and unrelenting, but putting his mercy in its proper place, and this mercy freely

freely held forth to sinners, is the most solid ground of repentance and amendment.

REPENTANCE and amendment, tho' it is in itself right and proper for all who are convinced they are, or have been in the wrong, yet it can by no means be look'd upon as a proper recompence or retaliation for that wrong; for as he that repents and amends, does no more than he ought to do, his repentance and amendment answers but for itself, and merits nothing.

FURTHER, the most ingenuous and genuine repentance and amendment, takes its rise, not only from being convinced we have been in the wrong, but also from a sense of the favour of God to us, in forgiving and blotting out our transgressions freely. It is therefore absolutely necessary, that the justice of God be manifested in punishing our sins in the person of Christ, and that the love and mercy of our God be manifested by his freely given and calling upon us to receive remission of sins in his blood, in order to form a proper ground of true repentance and amendment.

To this it is objected, that the sufferings of the innocent could not possibly be a satisfaction for the faults of the guilty, because as far as justice comes in the case, it requires the subjects in which the fault is, to be punished, and the contrary to this is manifestly unjust.

Ans. WHEN a crime is committed, what remains is not the action itself, but the evil consequences of the action, and the guilt or a debt to justice, contracted by that action, and it is no more unjust to take payment of this debt from another that did not

not contract it, but offers it voluntarily in the behalf of the contractor *, then it would be in case of debt; and was not this admitted, no mercy could be shewn in such a case but with the loss of justice.

AGAIN it is objected, that as it is by our misbehaviour we render ourselves personally displeasing to God, and are become the proper objects of his dislike or resentment; so by our repentance and amendment, we become the proper objects of his approbation and affection.

Ans. IF sin was only like an error in a road, it would be fully at an end when the right path was taken; but the scripture sets it forth not only in that character, but also in the nature of a debt, of a disease, of a rebellion, all which description of it requires abundantly more than our repentance and amendment, to rectify the disorder brought in by it.

WHEN

* I would observe, by the way, that though we are oblig'd to speak thus after the manner of the relations we bear to one another, yet as man's reason falls *infinitely* short of measuring the incomprehensible wisdom of God; so do these relations *strictly* to measure the relation between God and his creatures; or to shew what the nature, evil tendency, and guilt of sin *fully* is, or what is the *fittest* propitiation for God to require in such a case; for tho' the relative character of father, judge, preserver, &c. may be look'd upon as helps to comprehend, in some measure, the relation God bears to us, yet not as any full description of it, and therefore many things may be affirm'd or deny'd, in regard to those relations, which cannot be affirm'd or deny'd in respect of God's relation to us; and tho' the reality of the existence of the relations are very plain to us, and serve to shew us our obligations, yet any thing further is incomprehensible by us, and therefore stands as a solid reason against our limiting the divine proceedings in those matters, and for our submission to such a description of them we have in his word.

WHEN we speak of God's wrath, dislike, or resentment, we are properly to understand not merely a passion of anger and resentment, after the manner of men, but his justice, as above described, *viz.* a wise, good, holy, and just charge of sin, as a debt, upon those persons who have abused the end of their creation, in such and such respects; such persons, notwithstanding all the repentance and amendment possible to be conceived, can never thereby become the proper objects of his approbation and affection, according to justice, and as to their being objects of his love, in any other respect God is unchangeably love in his *nature*. He is love, whether they repent or no, yea whether they are damned or saved.

THIS is plainly confirmed unto us in the scriptures, where we are told in one place, that the wrath of God abides on them that believe not; and again in another place, that God *so loved* the world, that is the world of ungodly sinners, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life; and when the *Jews* were given up to just wrath, our Saviour, at the same time is described as weeping over *Jerusalem*, shewing he loved them at the same time, tho' he saw their destruction just and necessary.

GOD cannot but be pleased with, and approve that his creatures should imitate and obey him, and act in every relation in such a manner as is evidently right, and consequently both for the good of themselves and others, and he cannot but be displeased with whatever is wrong and contrary; and it becometh him to make a suitable difference in such cases, for if wickedness went unpunish'd, then God never signifies his disapprobation

tion of it, and there remains no sufficient proof that he is displeased with it, nor that it is forbidden. Nevertheless as we are still the work of his hands, we are as much in that respect the proper objects of his approbation and affection, and are as truly objects of his care, love, &c. when we have acted in such a manner as he is displeased with, as we were before ; but as we are objects of his displeasure, by the just debt of our iniquitous dealings, we must remain objects of his displeasure in the sense, notwithstanding all repentance and amendment, until the debt is paid off and discharged, and this must either be by the punishment and destruction of the transgressors, or the substitution of another in our room.

To this I would beg leave to add, what Mr. *William Law* says to the same objection ; “ He therefore
 “ that says, *If sin be the cause of God's displeasure,*
 “ *must not the ceasing from sin take away his displeasure?*
 “ has just as much sense and reason on his side, as if
 “ he had said, if a man's *murdering* of himself,
 “ is the cause of God's displeasure, must not his re-
 “ storing himself to life again, take away God's
 “ displeasure. For there is as much foundation in
 “ reason, and the nature of things, to affirm that
 “ the soul of a *self-murderer* must have a sufficient
 “ power to undo the effects of murder, and put
 “ him in his former state, as to affirm, that *every*
 “ *sinner* must have a sufficient natural power of un-
 “ doing all the effects of sin, and putting himself
 “ into the same state as if he had never sinned.

“ This objection, therefore, against any *superna-*
 “ *tural* means of attoning for sin, taken from the
 “ *sufficiency* of our own repentance, is as *clear* and
 “ *philosophical*, as that knowledge that is without
 “ any

“ *any ideas* ; and as justly to be rely'd upon, as
 “ that *conclusion* which has no premises.” *Case of Reason*, p. 34, 35.

“ WERE they to affirm, that *sinning angels* might
 “ sufficiently regain their former perfection by a
 “ *bare wish*, they would proceed as much accord-
 “ ing to their knowledge of the nature of things,
 “ as in affirming, that *sinful man* can *merit*
 “ the pardon of his sins by his *own repentance*.
 “ I say *merit*, because they who hold repen-
 “ tance to be a sufficient title to pardon, can be
 “ no farther certain of it, than so far as they are
 “ certain that it *merits* it. And, according to this
 “ *Scheme*, the *penitent*, who thinks he has repented,
 “ need not beg of God to have compassion upon
 “ him, but *demand*s a due, which the *nature of*
 “ *things* gives him a right to claim.” p. 30. 31.

BUT to return, it is objected against the substitution of *Christ*, that what is personally pleasing in one agent, *i. e.* *Jesus Christ*, cannot possibly render another agent pleasing to God, because that the other does not thereby become the proper object of it.

Ans. So far as *Jesus* did what was personally pleasing in God's sight for us, in our name, room, and stead, as one pays a debt for another, if it is given to us as such, and received by us as such, it is as just for God to lay it to our account, and to give the just reward thereof, as tho' we had done it for ourselves; and as to our becoming the proper objects of his favour, unless we are omniscient as God is, we are no proper judges who are such; but according to revelation, we see God is pleased to account his enemies the proper objects of it, when we are told,

D

that

that while we were yet finners, ungodly, and without strength, *Christ* died for us, to reconcile our forgiveness to his justice, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins*, 1 John iii. 10.

BUT it is also objected, that if *Christ* hath suffered all the hell that is due to sin, and if it is inconsistent with the strictest justice to punish the same transgression twice, does not this prove, if it proves any thing, that all mankind are thereby exempted from punishment.

Ans. IF the end of suffering all the hell that is due to sin, was to release all mankind, whether they believ'd or no, the consequence is just; but if the end of *Christ* bearing all the hell that is due to sin, was to be a propitiation thro' *faith* in his blood, then it is as just, that he that believeth should be saved, and he that believeth not should be damned. For every one has a right to have any favour they confer, conferr'd in such a way as is agreeable to them; and this is more especially to be granted to him, who does always what is wisest and best.

AGAIN, as he that is paid, has no further right over his debtor, so justice being satisfy'd, as it stood in the way of love and mercy, has no further demand, but as he that pays a debt for another, has a right to release or retain the debtor as he pleases; so God having satisfy'd his own justice (as abovemention'd) by this propitiation, has, consistent with all his perfections, the right of forgiving sin, or imputing it, justifying, or condemning in his own hands; and therefore seeing

seeing God in Christ still retains the relation of a creditor, it is not inconsistent with the strictest justice, to charge the debt upon, and punish all those, who do not by faith submit themselves unto the righteousness of God; as on the other hand, to those who have received the atonement, such conduct would be charging the debt twice. Thus *Christ* suffering all the hell that is due to sin, reaches as far as it was intended; that is, not so far as to put sinners out of God's reach, but so far, as that God might thereby be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in *Jesus*; so far, as that remission of sins should be preach'd in his name to all nations, and every creature, according to the full meaning of that scripture, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16.

It is likewise objected, that making satisfaction implies damage being sustain'd by the party to whom satisfaction is made; in strictness of speech, the divinity cannot suffer any damage, and in that sense cannot want any satisfaction.

To this unchristian-like objection, I answer, the divinity is allow'd incapable of suffering any damage from *this* consideration, that he is absolutely independant and self-sufficient, and therefore as such, to support and vindicate himself and his perfections, will not suffer his moral perfections of justice, truth, &c. to be infringed upon by the actions of men; but this makes nothing at all for the *objector*, but, on the contrary, is a strong reason why the holy and just God reveals his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,

lest his moral character should suffer damage; it is also a sufficient reason why he continues that holy and just wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, (notwithstanding all pretended repentance and amendment) unto the entire destruction of the sinner, or full satisfaction by a substitute, and thus maintains the character of a God that will by no means clear the guilty, lest his moral perfections should suffer damage.

ANOTHER objection is, that if God is of such a temper, as not to forgive or be reconcil'd upon repentance and humiliation, without another who was innocent, to take the guilt, and suffer the punishment, how is the divine veracity provided for: To say Christ is a representative, will never reconcile the affair, because then it is his representative-ship that is deem'd guilty, and his person which is allow'd to be innocent, suffers. This is a contradiction to the moral attributes of God.

Ans. It is not temper or humour in God, but his moral perfections that render repentance insufficient; the divine veracity which says, *curst is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*, is not at all provided for in the acceptance of repentance and amendment; it is also a perfection of his justice, that he will by no means clear the guilty. In this case there is no possibility for any one that has sinned to be saved, without a substitution of another is allow'd; and such a substitute, tho' his person, consider'd separate from his substitution, may be deem'd innocent, (as a person may, consider'd separate from his sins) yet his person consider'd as the substitute of the guilty, is no longer innocent,

innocent, but chargeable with the crimes of those for whom he is substitute ; thus it is not his substitution, or representativenesship that is deem'd guilty, and his person innocent, but his person is deem'd guilty, and suffers as such, because his person is the substitute of the guilty, and in this sense it is no more a contradiction to the moral attributes of God, that the innocent should by his appointment suffer for the guilty, than it is to the scripture, that *the just should suffer for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*

As the end of punishment with God is not to gratify the passion of anger on the person that has offended, but to act according to his own perfections, reclaim the offender, and prevent the like evils : So if this end is answer'd, as well and better by substituting one in the sinner's stead, and *Christ* was voluntary in the matter, there is no inconsistency, but rather a manifestation of wisdom and goodness, &c. God in this respect acts as a wise and good government, administering both justice and mercy, not from humour, but with an eye to both, in such a manner, as is to the good of the whole, and his own glory.

It is also objected, that this doctrine cramps, if not entirely dissolves the very best foundations, principles, and basis of all true piety, viz. the fear of God, as a punisher of men's actions hereafter.

Ans. I THINK the fear of God, as a punisher of men's actions, is dissolved rather by the doctrine of God's mitigating or abating the punishment without a satisfaction. However, they must be very ignorant of a true principle of piety, who
affirm,

affirm, that fear which hath torment to be the best. The apostle *John* tells us, *we love him because he first loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

AGAIN it is objected, that God hath commanded us to exercise forgiveness without satisfaction to others; and is it not strange, he should not be able to act in this manner himself by his own creatures?

Ans. God's ability or power is not to be exalted against his other perfections, and what becomes man, as a creature, standing in need of mercy and forgiveness himself, is no rule to judge of God by, who always acts according to the perfections of his own nature, and therefore what would be noble and generous in us, may be unjust and unbecoming in him.

LASTLY, it is objected, that what is wanting to fallen man, is an internal rectitude of mind, which can only be effected by an internal operation; that paying a debt, or making satisfaction, is not the thing, but working a change, and bringing the mind into order.

Ans. THAT rectitude of mind is not paying a debt, is very true, and therefore that man wants an internal rectitude of mind, does not at all disprove, but that he also stands in need of a satisfaction to divine justice, for the transgressions he is justly chargeable with; and a true knowledge of this reconciliation, thro' faith in *Christ*, produces that rectitude of mind we stand in need of.

MAN'S

MAN's liableness to sin, and God's just anger against it, seems to render it necessary, (in order to their preservation from utter destruction) to appoint a propitiation for sin; for upon every sin, we must suppose just wrath and condemnation to ensue, and upon every sin, man being in a worse estate than before, is less capable of standing, consequently they must fall continually lower and lower, further and further from God; but by a propitiation, God's justice is vindicated in the remission of sin, and man is upheld by the ascertainment of God's favour to him, which favour being communicated by way of free gift, is a proper ground of repentance and amendment, and the most consistent and proper method of preserving man from utter ruin; and moreover by such a display and happy participation of the divine perfections as we have by faith in *Christ*, we are not only restored to a true state of happiness, but also are hereby strengthened and influenced to live to his glory, whose love to our souls we are thus made sensible of. Thus, as I propos'd, I have given my FREE THOUGHTS on the subjects mention'd, and shall conclude with observing, that as they are of the greatest importance to us, so they ought to have our most serious consideration.

F I N I S.



Man's liability to sin, and God's just anger against it, seems to render it necessary (in order to their preservation from their delinquency) to appoint a propitiation for sin; for upon every sin, we must suppose just wrath and condemnation to ensue, and upon every sin, man being in a worse state than before, is less capable of standing, consequently they must fall continually lower and lower, further and further from God; but by a propitiation, God's justice is vindicated in the remission of sin, and man is upheld by the merit of God's favour to him, which favour being communicated by way of the gift, is a propitiation of a punishment and amendment, and the most consistent and proper method of preserving man from utter ruin; and moreover by such a display and happy participation of the divine goodness as we have by faith in Christ, we are not only restored to a true state of happiness, but also are hereby strengthened and inclined to live to his glory, whose love to our souls we are thus made sensible of. Thus, as I proceed, I have given my testimony on the subject of man's nature, and shall conclude with observing that as they are of the greatest importance to us, so they ought to have our most tender consideration.



